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THE THEOSOPHICAL FORUM.

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Each member can send questions, answers to questions, opinions, and notes upon Theosophical subjects. When necessary, the various communications will be condensed by the editor. Members will be careful to write on only one side of the paper and to use black ink.

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FOR PARAGRAPHS UNDER THE WORD "ANS." THE EDITOR IS PERSONALLY RESPONSIBLE.

November, 1893.

QUESTION CCLXV.

Is not the mission of the T.S. about accomplished, now that the general public has advanced to a point which makes a Parliament of Religions possible?

L. A. L.—To bring about a sympathetic recognition between all servants of righteousness is certainly one of the prime objects of the T. S., and there is undoubtedly less work for it to do now in this direction than there was ten years ago, when a Parliament of Religions would have been a more difficult achievement, or twenty-five years ago, when it would have been a practical impossibility. But so long as there is still in the land any hatred, expressed or latent, of alien forms of religion; so long as there is war between the sects of Christianity; so long as any still hold the belief that salvation is to be found within the narrow bounds of one small faith while damnation awaits all outside,—so long will there be work for all who believe that the essentials of right living are more import-

ant than forms of intellectual belief. There has undoubtedly been a general broadening of public sympathy in religious matters during late years. The pioneers in the present movement, who fifty and even twenty-five years ago were forced to take their stand against the world in order to be true to their convictions of a "rational religion", have already seen the world swing around to their position in many details. The churches that call themselves "orthodox" have been lifted unconsciously by the "tidal wave of deeper souls," and now frankly hold and defend ideas that would have seemed most reprehensibly heterodox to the churches that bore their name fifty years ago. The press, echoing public opinion, is ready to regard any form of religious faith as deserving of tolerant treatment, and, as shown in the comments on the Parliament of Religions, to deal courteously by those non-Christian faiths which only a short while ago were regarded as heathenish and essentially wicked.

In all this, the Theosophical movement has had a share. To some Theosophists, with the dust of battle in their eyes, it has perhaps seemed as though the whole awakening were of their working. But there are other workers who, with the dust of their particular battles in their eyes, claim in the same way and with the same conscientiousness the buffetings and the glory. Probably the truth is that none have an exclusive right to either. One of the surprises of patriotism was the way in which, when President Lincoln sent out his call for volunteers, the whole nation was found ready to answer. The wave of enthusiasm had lifted the "plain people" to heroism. So a wave of spiritual earnestness has in these later years been lifting masses of people who are unconscious of their own changed attitude. Humanity as a whole, feeling the danger that threatens from the materializing of its ideals, is surging toward a more spiritual stand. The T. S. has helped in this movement, is helping still, and will have work to do for some time to come.

The world is full of people in different grades of development. Therefore the divine message, to be understood, must take different forms of expression. One soul thrills in answer

to one keynote, another responds only when the word comes in another tone. So long as anyone feels impelled for love of the truth to declare himself and the faith that is in him, he may take it as a sign that someone, somewhere, needs just the assurance that he can give. There is a bit of occultism for those who love to trace cosmic laws in their own affairs! When the world reaches a point of development where people take it as much for granted that they must live at their best as they now do that they must live at their busiest, the preachers and teachers, their occupation being gone, will probably have evolved into some other sphere of being also. But for the present, every aspiration, every earnest impulse that takes form in any human heart, needs expression There are always those just behind who have not quite shaped the aspiration for themselves, and who will be helped by seeing it definitely outlined in another's thought. And thence it follows that for the present there is no opportunity for anyone who desires the betterment of the race to fold his hands and take his ease. The T. S. as a whole and its members as individuals will find work to do for some time to come in simply repeating and repeating again, with quiet persistence, the broad and broadening principles which have already been declared. These principles are appreciated by all who have associated themselves with the Society, and by many others, but they are still new to a great majority of the men of to-day. They must be made commonplaces to all. The T. S. is regarded by many as a cupboard of unusual knowledge, more or less secret. There is danger in this view, for it creates a tendency on the part of many to expect new revelations constantly. As soon as one theory has been received and absorbed, they wait expectantly for another. The result is a cheapening in value of those really important principles of brotherhood and of religious toleration on which the chief emphasis may well be laid for some time to come. In fact, it would seem to depend largely upon this emphasis whether the T. S. as we know it shall be only a temporary scaffolding in the erection of the "church universal", or a broad stairway in the edifice itself, ever guiding pilgrims to the upper shrine.

QUESTION CCLXVI.

What is the process whereby the Karmic elements of man become embodied after death in the entity known as the Kama Rupa? How can intangible subjective desires, passions, and the like become "rupa", or whence comes the body or rupa?

Ans.—This is a question upon which the FORUM has for long time sought information privately, but in vain. There are two classes of desire in the human mind, those having their original prompting in the body, the others arising in the mind itself. The former are greatly strengthened by mental picturing and by the exercise of ingenuity in devising new forms and fresh stimulants, this being particularly true of lasciviousness, but also of pleasures of the table, and, when firmly habitual, become a second nature to the mind, which often forces into action a body reluctant through exhaustion. Thus a desire born of the physical wants has made its home in the inner being and assumed control there.

The other class is of mental desires having no relation to the physique, such as envy, jealousy, ambition, greed, and the like. They arise mostly from association with other men, and are vivified by a spirit of pure selfishness.

Such bodily desires as are purely so and without echo in and stimulus from the mind,—hunger, wish for sleep, etc., must of course expire utterly when the body does. Those which have penetrated from the body to the mind and those originating in the mind itself are affections of the mind, qualities of the intangible, hyper-physical being. They are not existences apart from the mind and capable of assuming an objective, material form, any more than color, weight, hardness can separate themselves from the articles in which they inhere and then appear as entities. We cannot objectivate lust, malice, cruelty as tangible things disconnected from the being who is characterized by them, for they are abstractions, the names of qualities marking the subject of them. But qualities have no existence apart from that subject.

Death removes instantaneously the outer and physical vestment, and then dissolves gradually the union between the permanent and impermanent constituents of the inner being. One can easily see how the properties of a personality may be separable from the individuality, and also how they, together with the mind containing them, might have manifestation in some tenuous or semi-material form provided from without. But how they can themselves constitute a form is incomprehensible. Either there can be no kama-rupa composed of abstract qualities, or—which seems more probable—there is some other explanation of the genesis of the rupa which has not been given out in Theosophical works.

W. Q. J.—If the process were given it would not be understood, since it is one for which our language has no words. It is for this reason that descriptions given by clairvoyants of various occult things seem pure twaddle and vague mutterings to those who for themselves cannot clairvoyantly see the same thing. How could it be possible to describe the operations of the occult Cosmos in the terms of materialistic science and philosophy? That hidden Cosmos is ideal in its fineness, and the very attempt to fully describe the process enquired of would convey only doubt and certainly result in confusion. But it is no more hidden than is the process by which the body builds itself up every day; nor than that by which a thought will affect the entire nervous system. A simple thought will bring a hot flush or a cold shiver. How? No one knows. Certainly no scientific terms exist to describe the mode and means whereby the thought connects itself with the human physiological machine. And if this be so on this plane, is it likely that an Adept's description of the coälescence of Kama with an astral body after death would be comprehended save in the most general way? This general way may be gotten at by considering the action of the magnet. It attracts, but no scientific man can look behind that fact; it even can attract an electric flame, but there too the process is occult. In the same way there is an attraction between the mass of desires called Kama and the

astral form which causes them to come together just as a similar attractive force brought Ego and body together.

But desires and passions are not intangible and subjective in the sense given by the question. They are in their sphere — though not in this — quite tangible and objective, and those two words must be altered when we pass beyond the consideration of this plane. If the questioner insists that on every plane desires and passions are intangible and subjective, that will dispose of the question, because in such a case they certainly could never attract anything But it will first have to be explained how such "intangible and subjective" things as passion and desire can and do have an objective effect even on this plane. As on their own plane they are full of force and tangibility, they attract to themselves the necessary quantum of astral matter, invisible to us but still there, to form a sheath of covering. Having their center in the thinker, they radiate from that and cause their effects until cut off from their center, when they begin to dissipate unless linked with some other center from which they might get activity. But the whole difficulty grows, it seems to me, out of the prevalent habit of regarding this so-called objective world as real, and forgetting that the mental and spiritual realms are the only real ones, this being simply the phenomenal expression of those. I therefore disagree from the editor when he says that such and such desires "are not existences apart from the mind and capable of assuming an objective form," for I think they are just such existences and have the capacity to take on an objective form. He is simply stating modern conceptions, which are wholly erroneous and springing from a system of philosophy which does not know that the mind is an entity, and while his illustrations are all good for the school to which they belong, they are completely negatived by the facts of Occultism. For instance, if a practitioner of magic — and not a very high one either — were to fix in his mind the image of an object, it would soon become objective to our physical senses, just as it was first in fact objective to our inner senses. This could not be possible if the objective and subjective of one plane are forever on every plane subjective and objective.

That which we now from this plane call "abstract qualities" change on another plane into "objective things." So I regard it an error to call the desire and passions abstract qualities, unless we say at the same time that we mean it relatively.

QUESTION CCLIX *(continued)*.

K. E. Turnbull.—W.Q.J. says in his answer to question CCLIX of THEOSOPHICAL FORUM that he "would like to know where the fact is alleged by any competent witness" that H.P.B. was taught of Masters in Thibet.

Fortunately it is easy to gratify Mr. Judge's desire for information on this point, by turning to a work of some authority in Theosophical literature, since it may be likened to the acorn from which the oak of the T.S. has sprung. Needless to say, I allude to the *Occult World* of Mr. Sinnett, where on page 34 he speaks of H.P.B's having "carried on a course of occult study for seven years in a Himalayan retreat," which retreat has been so identified with Thibet by Theosophists generally that I have known members of the Society allude to the place and length of sojourn as an undoubted fact, and have even heard Mr. Judge in a private conversation refer to it as a matter beyond dispute. Of course it may be contended that assertion is not evidence, and also that Mr. Sinnett is not "competent" to repeat accurately what he was told by the principal in the action; but the first contention comes with ill grace from many members of the Society who have shown themselves not averse to dispense with all proof where mere assertion would serve the purpose equally well: and, if the second plea were to be urged, it would utterly invalidate every single statement in Mr. Sinnett's famous book, as much as the one in question. It is presumable that Mr. Sinnett in making the statement derived the fact from H.P.B. herself, since it is hardly likely he evolved the idea directly from his own imaginative consciousness; and if H.P.B. did not herself know where she was taught, nor how long she was under tuition, nor that the "Himalayan retreat" was asserted by herself and taken by others to

be synonymous with the Lodge in Thibet,—it is not readily conceivable that Mr. Judge would be apt to have any fuller or more accurate data upon the matter than herself or others.

To pass to Mr. Judge's second and third points, he says that "reïncarnation was not disavowed in her early writings," an instance of assertion without proof, for if we turn to *Isis Unveiled* we find on page 346, Vol. I., these words: "The Hindu dreads above all things transmigration and reïncarnation; only on other and inferior planets, *never on this one.* But there is a way to avoid it," etc., etc. And again, on page 347, "But the former life believed in by the Buddhists *is not a life on this planet,*" etc. Mr. Judge has something to say about making careful references, so it is the more surprising that he has omitted to continue the quotation on page 351, Vol. I. of *Isis*, where it is distinctly asserted that: "If *reason* has been so far developed as to become active and discriminative, *there is no reïncarnation on this earth*, for the three parts of the triune man have been united together, and he is capable of running the race." This obviously applies to the reïncarnation of the individual entity, and not at all to the astral monad, as it is readily seen by continuing the paragraph, as well as by taking it together with the context.

It is quite useless to refer to writings in the *Theosophist* and elsewhere *later than 1875*, for the point is, did H.P.B. accept and teach the doctrine of reïncarnation at that early date? We have the evidence of Col. Olcott that she did not teach it then; we have also the evidence of Mr. W. R. Old that H.P.B. herself said to him that the doctrine was only taught her on her return to India in 1879, which agrees perfectly with the evidence furnished by the very articles Mr. Judge relies on so strongly, the effort in these being plainly manifest to correct the impression first given. As no explanation is anywhere to be found in *Isis* as to the exact meaning attached to the term "astral monad," it is open to conjecture if all that we hear about it now has not, as in many like instances, been read into it by a later knowledge and a fuller experience.

Since Mr. Judge sees fit to deny the statement of Col. Olcott, as also of Mr. Old, and in the matter of the Thibetan or Hima-

layan sojourn of Mr. Sinnett himself,—it is pertinent to ask what are his own credentials for the counter assertion? He must remember that Col. Olcott is corroborated by Mr. Old, *who quotes H.P B. herself*, thus making three strong assertions to his one, besides the two portly tomes of *Isis*, whose 1268 pages confront him, wherein is never an allusion to reïncarnation except in the paragraphs cited, which taken together would not make two pages of the book. It would seem mere quibble to use H.P.B's ignorance of English as causing these contradictions, when there were collaborators who assisted her in editing *Isis* to whom an imperfect acquaintance with their mother-tongue cannot be imputed.

W.Q.J.—The Countess Wachtmeister in *Reminiscences of H. P. Blavatsky, etc.*, published since the last FORUM, quotes (page 57) H.P.B's statement to her that the Master forewarned her that she would have to spend three years in Thibet, which is certainly authoritative.

QUESTION CCLVII *(continued)*.

E. C. Reynolds.—In the answer to this a note on page 161, *Key to Theosophy*, is referred to. It seems to me that if that page is read carefully, it will be found rather to support the views of W.Q.J. given under the same question; for on that page H.P.B. says: "If it may be said that there is not a mental or physical suffering in the life of a mortal which is not the direct fruit and consequence of some sin in a preceding existence; on the other hand, since he does not preserve the slightest recollection of it in his actual life, and feels himself not deserving of such punishment, and therefore thinks he suffers for no guilt of his own, this alone is sufficient to entitle the human soul to the fullest consolation, rest, and bliss in his post-mortem existence." From this passage it would seem to me that H.P.B. held that a person's suffering and "supposing it not due, and therefore having mental grief" DOES constitute ground for reward.

But laying aside all references, of which our interpretations are very prone to differ, it seems to me that the following propositions, if not self-evident, are at least strictly logical.

1. In a Universe governed entirely by law (as we believe this to be), nothing can possibly happen by *chance*.

2. Since Karma is not a conscious being that rewards and punishes at pleasure, but an immutable law that determines consequences as the planting determines the harvest, it follows that it can bring to a man no result for which he has not previously supplied a cause.

If we admit the possibility of unmerited suffering at the hands of others, we introduce an ever present element of chance (as far as the individual considered is concerned) which is contrary to our first proposition. If we deny that proposition and admit the possibility of chance entering into the Universe, it seems to me that the whole fabric of Theosophy falls to the ground, for the reasoner who would build up any system on it finds an uncertain (and therefore possibly destructive element) facing him at every step.

To look at the matter in another light: if we admit the possibility of unmerited interference by one individual in the life of another, we have introduced a cause into the chain of the latter's existence which is neither the result of preceding manifested causes produce by him, nor yet a cause introduced by his will from that portion of the Universe still unmanifested. Now since Karma simply adjusts the results to the causes and cannot undo a cause once set in operation, it follows that one cause introduced, for which the Ego is not responsible, vitiates the result, and may lift entirely the load of responsiblity for that result which we are accustomed to lay on the Ego itself; just as the breaking of a rope in a yacht-race may relieve the steersman from all responsibility for not winning the race.

As a further development of the second proposition, it seems to me that, as Karma is a law, we can only limit its action by law, and therefore are not at liberty to conceive of it as having the discrimination to pick out one individual who is to bring us retributive justice and not another who may, perhaps, harm us much more. And if we *should* give it this discriminating power

(which, as I understand it, the writer of the answer to question CCLVII does in effect), in what respect is our philosophy superior to the commonly accepted idea of Divine Providence, which in a heaven of bliss hereafter will make right any little unjust suffering that may have occurred through differences in birth or environment? Such a doctrine, it is true, may differ in degree from that of Divine Providence, but is surely essentially the same in kind.

In the answer to question CCLXII it is claimed that a Devachan of the nature indicated by W.Q.J. puts a premium on ignorance over knowledge; this might perhaps be true IF THE PLEASURE OF THE INDIVIDUAL AND NOT HIS DEVELOPMENT were the result that Nature is seeking and that therefore WE should also seek. If the writer of the above answer would be consistent, he should go a step farther and say that the fairy tales which we teach children to brighten their lives and develop their imaginations place a "premium on ignorance over knowledge." I don't think that anyone would claim or say that the deeper knowledge of maturity does not make up for the loss of early beliefs.

So the widened horizon of the "strong souls" surely compensates them fully for the loss of Devachanic dreams, even on so low a basis as that of mere pleasure.

QUESTION CCLXVII.

Please tell me the meaning of "Lead us not into temptation" in the Lord's Prayer. The word "lead" is what bothers me. Surely God would not lead us into temptation, yet Jesus gave the prayer to the disciples.

Ans.—It is told of the famous Theodore Parker that, one evening after preaching, he was accosted by a sailor who said to him, "Mr. Parker, I was greatly impressed by your sermon, but one thing in your prayer troubled me. You asked God not to lead us into temptation. Now why should we ask God not to do a thing which His own nature forbids His

doing?" Mr. Parker was deeply affected by this, and at last replied, "You are right". It is said that never again did he use the Lord's Prayer with the customary wording, but invariably altered it to "Lead us *from* temptation, and deliver us from evil". The editor of the FORUM may add that he himself was so impressed when first encountering this story years ago, that he has since then used the phrase only in the form as corrected by Mr. Parker.

The Lord's Prayer was not original with Jesus, but existed in Jewish sacred writings long before his time, and was only modified and adopted by him as a simple and reverent form. The original words have been repeatedly published. They were not an inspired utterance, hence forever stereotyped, but only a wholesome model which may be adjusted to suit times and persons. Even as commended by Jesus, the language is not precisely the same in the several Gospels. Hence it would seem wise to regard the whole Prayer as he regarded it, *viz.*, as a beautiful and comprehensive and edifying petition, not obligatory in verbal structure, but open to change in the way of improvement. The clause about temptation is such a case. It certainly is superfluous to pray that God would abstain from doing what He would not and could not do, whereas to ask that He would lead us away from what might cause our downfall is a fitting and proper petition. Why not, then, do as did Mr Parker, alter the words so as to express the correct thought? For prayer, above every thing else, should be *real*, and reality is impaired when we have to explain away or resort to unnatural interpretations. It is better to use a right word than to twist a wrong word into a right sense. Epeolatry is not a salutary habit, and it is pretty sure to stultify reason and blunt moral perception, to say nothing of its influence on quick-sighted outsiders who are only too ready to seize upon inconsistencies or irrationalitis in the godly.

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